



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

FOREIGN AFFAIRS
WESTERN HEMISPHERE
TERRORISM, NONPROLIFERATION, AND TRADE
NATURAL RESOURCES
RANKING MEMBER
INDIAN, INSULAR AND ALASKA NATIVE AFFAIRS
FEDERAL LANDS

December 21, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary

We write to express our deep concern regarding the post-election crisis in Honduras.

Since the general elections that took place on November 26, election observation missions and the main opposition political parties have raised legitimate concerns about possible manipulation of the electoral process and have questioned the accuracy of the results. The Organization of American States electoral observation mission has indicated that, to date, Honduras's Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) has failed to address those concerns in a satisfactory manner. On December 17, after the TSE declared President Hernandez the winner, the Secretary General of the Organization of American States, Luis Almagro, called for new elections.

The failure to reach consensus on a path forward has already led to violence and unrest. The Honduran people's faith in their institutions was already weak before the election; the past weeks have further undermined that faith, and Hondurans have taken to the streets to express their anger and disillusionment. Most of the protests have been peaceful, but some have become violent. The government's response has been disproportionate: security forces have used live bullets against protesters, and they have killed at least 23 people to date.

Stability and democratic governance in Honduras are of great concern to the United States. Congress has recognized, on a bipartisan basis, that addressing the root causes of migration from Central America, especially from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, is in the United States' national interest. We have invested hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in foreign assistance programs that seek to strengthen democratic governance, reduce violence, and expand economic opportunity in the region.

Thus far, the State Department's response to events in Honduras has been inadequate. The Department has called for protesters to refrain from violence, but has failed to denounce the excessive use of force by Honduran security forces. Moreover, the Department's decision to certify Honduras shortly after the election has helped to foster the perception that the United States is biased, and is either unwilling or unable to serve as an honest broker.

Clearly, the State Department's capacity to address the electoral crisis in Honduras is limited by the fact that the Trump administration has failed to nominate an Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere affairs and an Ambassador to Honduras. But that is no excuse. In the past year, the United

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States has spoken out forcefully to express concerns about electoral processes in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and Cuba. The United States can and should speak out forcefully regarding the electoral process in Honduras.

We urge you to take a stronger position in support of democracy in Honduras. Specifically, in addition to continuing to call for all sides to refrain from violence, the United States should denounce the excessive use of force by Honduras' security forces. The United States should also support the efforts of the OAS and its Secretary General to advance a peaceful, democratic path forward in Honduras.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



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Central America Caucus



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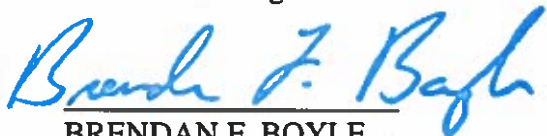
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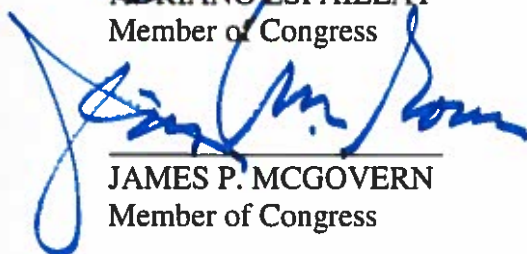
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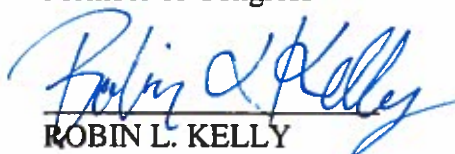
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